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SERMON CLXXX.

By ROBERT H. BISHOP, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF MIAMI UNIVERSITY, OHIO.

A GOOD WIFE A HEAVENLY GIFT.

Prov. xix. 14. *House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; and a prudent wife is from the Lord.*

Our present life, though frequently and justly styled a life of sorrow and disappointment, is also one of great and varied enjoyment. The earth is full of the goodness of Jehovah, and all the departments of life, and every individual in every department have their full share of this goodness. And one of the great sources of nearly all the sorrow and anxieties, in social life particularly, is, that many men know not the full value of one single blessing which they possess—that is a good wife.

Among the many never failing sources of enjoyment connected with the present state of things, the exercise of the social affections holds a distinguished place. The phrases “a good neighbor, a good father, a good mother, a good sister, a good brother, a good son and a good daughter, and a good companion,” are well understood by all, as full of meaning, and full of enjoyment, but no human tongue can express all the enjoyment which they contain, or even communicate.

And in the wise and the good, and extended and comprehensive arrangements of Providence, all these, and all the enjoyments derived from them, spring from one common source—a good wife and a good mother. By the very constitution of our nature, the whole character of civil society, from the smallest family to the largest empire, is formed by the aggregate character of the mothers and wives within the district.

By a figure of speech common in all languages, and among all classes of men, all the qualifications of a good wife and a good mother, are in the text expressed by one term, viz:—*prudence*. Prudence, in its strict and proper sense, has a particular reference to the choice of fit means to accomplish a particular end, in the easiest and safest method possible. And with a good wife, not only the possession, but the daily exercise of this invaluable gift is indispensable. There is in fact no individual, in all the branches of society, who has such constant, and daily, and hourly use for this quality of mind.

The management of the family falls chiefly upon the wife, and whatever may be the state of the family resources, or the character of the members, the wife is responsible for the whole. She has to manage children of every age, and in every state of health and sickness, and of every kind of temper and disposition. She has to manage servants who are always more or less to be instructed and watched, as well as directed, and who are frequently very

fluctuating and irritable. Her house is also more or less open at all times to neighbors, and friends, and strangers, who in many cases require extensive and varied attention. And add to all—it not unfrequently happens—that the daily business of the husband is by no means well adapted to the convenience either of his wife, or of any of his friends—so that his regular visits to the bosom of his family, are to *receive*, rather than to *give* assistance and refreshment. And this, where there is no lack of affection.

It is thus, that the best arrangements of any family which has the least intercourse with the neighborhood, or with the world, is almost daily liable to interruptions, and all the members of the little republic are continually changing their relative position to one another, and to others. And thus the temper and patience, and expedients, and resources of the woman, who is at the head of the establishment, must be continually tried, and in many cases tried most severely. Of what importance then to any man, and to society at large, must be the enjoyment of “a prudent and efficient wife.”

1. Let us attend to some things included in the phrase “a prudent wife.”

1. A good wife must possess a large share of what is called “common sense.” She must know by a kind of instinct how to act on every emergency—catch as it were by inspiration, the leading features in the characters and dispositions of the individuals, old or young, friends or strangers, to whom she is introduced, and with whom she is to act stately or occasionally. Without this, every other talent she may possess, and every attainment she may have acquired, will be of little use either to herself or to her family.

2. A good wife must be distinguished for self-command. A wife is at the head of a little society, in which are all the elements of every kind of society. But all these elements are here, in an unformed, and forming, and most fluctuating state. Hence, the first and most important lesson to be studied, and to be acquired by the individual who presides over a society in this state is, that she have, on all occasions, the most perfect command of herself.

3. Industry and economy form a third distinguishing feature in the character of a good wife. This is the leading feature in the detail which is given us by the Spirit of inspiration, Prov. xxxi, 10—end. It will be well for our country, and for our world, when this passage of holy writ shall be fully understood by every mother and every daughter of our land. Happy would it have been this day for the British nation, and for these United States, had this passage been made the text-book for female education, instead of the large importations which have been made of teachers, and of systems of education, and of maxims and habits from Italy and France.

The industry and economy of a wife, is particularly exhibited in having all the intervals of time, within the whole range of her government, filled up with some necessary and profitable employment, and in taking special care of fragments of time and fragments of property.

4. A good wife is an affectionate woman. The law of love and sincerity is written upon her heart; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. Every domestic, and every friend, and every stranger, and the friend of every distant friend and acquaintance, finds himself immediately at home while under her roof, and while partaking of her hospitality. Nor in all her intercourse with strangers or with acquaintances, does she cherish a thought, or willingly utter a syllable with the design of injuring the feelings or the character of a single human being. She will not take up, much less will she give circulation to a reproach against her neighbor, though this reproach should be brought to her table or whispered to her in her bed-chamber.

5. A good wife is of domestic habits, and of a domestic disposition. She enjoys herself nowhere so well as under her own roof, and while attending to her own private affairs. Her husband and her children, and the daily ordinary cares of the family, occupy her chief earthly attention. She is a good neighbor, and can always enjoy a good neighbor, whether at home or abroad.

But her own family is her peculiar and special province, and she has no desire to meddle with the domestic arrangements of any of her sister sovereigns. When she enters a neighboring family, it is to administer in some form to their comforts, not to embarrass them with their friends. Let wives, and mothers, and young women who expect soon to be at the head of households, read and study attentively, 1 Tim. v, 9—14.

One sinner destroys much good. One busy tattling woman, whether married or single, is enough to destroy all the social comforts of many families. And on the other hand, one prudent woman may be worth a thousand in preserving all that is valuable in the social intercourse of a village, or city, or neighborhood. Read and study the history of Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv, and of the woman of Tekoah, 2 Sam. xiv, 1—20, and of the wise woman mentioned in 2 Sam. xx, 16—22.

6. All these and similar qualifications in the good wife, must be associated with the possession and the exercise of genuine and ardent piety. The description of a good wife in the Bible, already referred to, closes with these important words: "Favor is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Infidels themselves, with very few exceptions, acknowledge the importance and necessity of piety among females. Take a sense of religion from a female, and she is an object of abhorrence even to those who are themselves polluted with every crime; and while many wicked fathers are by both precept and example initiating their own sons, and other young men, into all the elements of irreligion and debauchery, they shudder at the very thought of their wives and their daughters not being under the influence of the religion and morality of the Bible. If a little of this good thing then, be of such vital importance, even with those who personally know nothing of its value, of what value must it be, when it shall be the leading and the commanding principle of action in those upon whose fidelity, and activity, and daily and hourly labors, the welfare and the enjoyment of the whole community, must in every generation and in every state of society, from the very nature of things, depend? If a man is to be happy any where on earth, it must be in the bosom of his own family, rejoicing with the wife of his youth. And we repeat it, if a little of genuine piety, or of what may be only the semblance of genuine piety, be of such value in the estimation of those who personally know nothing of it, of what value must that wife be to her husband and to her family, whose piety is always ardent, and incorporated with all her plans and all her movements?

Genuine and ardent piety is of the utmost importance for the personal support and comfort of a good wife. She has in all her plans and in all her movements, her peculiar difficulties—difficulties which in many cases she can communicate to no human being—and difficulties also which when known to others, can be removed or alleviated only by the favor and the goodness of the Almighty. To her Father who is in heaven she must often look for direction and assistance, when neither father, nor mother, nor husband, nor any earthly friend can help in the least degree. Every pious wife and mother is familiar with the experience of the psalmist, "when my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."

Nor can the affection and piety of the husband, however sincere and ardent, relieve the mind of the wife in numerous cases of anxiety and difficulty. It is written, "Confounded be all they who serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols. Worship him, (that is Jehovah,) all ye gods." In every case, in exact proportion as the heart of a good wife is given to idolatry, she will be disappointed in the quarter from which she expected deliverance.

Genuine and ardent piety is indispensable in the character of a good wife,

for fulfilling the great and continued and extended plans of Providence. Under God, mothers form the character and the destiny of the whole human family. As the infant, the boy or girl is, so, with very few exceptions, will be the full grown man or woman. The great and leading features of the mother's character, are indelibly stamped upon every son and daughter of Adam. It is the great law of our nature, "Like everywhere produces and cherishes and perfects its like." Had it not been for the continued operations of this law, meekness, and gentleness, and goodness, and all the amiable and endearing qualities of humanity would probably have long ago been extinct, and utterly unknown in all those countries where the gospel is unknown. And in those countries and districts which have enjoyed the gospel, the influence of the pious and active wife and mother, has at all times been seen and felt and acknowledged by all, as one of the principal means by which generation after generation have served the Redeemer. The prospects of every particular church and congregation, have always been encouraging, as to the continuance of the gospel among them, just in proportion to the good character of the majority of the mothers.

Nor can there be any other individual so well qualified for forming human character, as a pious mother. Her affection for her own offspring is sincere and strong and lasting. She knows the value of the human soul; and is not unacquainted with the state of the world, and the realities of eternity. She has access to the understanding, and to the heart, and to the conscience of her children, as no other human being can have. She knows in her own experience, the truth of God's promise, and the efficacy which Jehovah has been pleased to attach to the prayer of faith. How often has she the opportunity of whispering in the ear of her child, and into the ear of her God at the same time, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me. As for me, this is my covenant with them saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

A worthy father in the ministry, who has seen much of domestic society in all the departments of life, has said, that he has yet to find a respectable family of sons and daughters where the mother was an ignorant or imprudent woman; but he has seen and known many respectable sons and daughters whose fathers were worthless, but whose mothers were the excellent ones of the earth.

We now consider,

II. In what respects a good wife is peculiarly and specially from the Lord.

1. The woman was originally formed to be an essential and special help to the man. Read and study attentively, Genesis ii, 18—20.

The man was set at the head of the lower world; he was made the lord of the earth, and of all that it contained—was to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; but he could have no enjoyment of any one of these, or of them all collectively, till another being was made. There was not as yet in the whole range of creation, an help meet for him. Hence woman, the last and the best and the noblest of all that was created, was formed. And was formed expressly to fill up the blank, and to supply the deficiency, and to put man into a situation in which he would be capable of enjoying his ample domain. And infinite wisdom and infinite power and infinite goodness adapted all belonging both to the body and to the mind of the woman, to that high and dignified rank, which was originally allotted to her in the scale of being. She commanded the heart of the man, and held in her hand the property and the destiny of millions upon millions. And if woman has ever been degraded, and rendered unfit for such a dignified station, it has been by the mutual transgression of

the man and the woman. It has been because our common nature has lost its original dignity, and has become depraved and corrupted.

2. Almost every pious man can trace very distinctly a special providence, in the arrangement of the circumstances, which connected him with the woman of his choice.

"House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord." The son may know at a very early period of life, and long before he is of age, what will probably be the amount of his earthly inheritance. But he knows not till he has obtained her, what kind of wife he is to have; and in cases without number this great and important matter is settled very expeditiously, and without much reasoning and reflection—in the common language of men, it is wholly a matter of feeling and of accident; yet the pious man who has been blest with that best of earthly blessings, a good wife, will often review with astonishment and gratitude, the manner in which a vast number of otherwise unconnected contingencies were at that most important period of his sojourn here below, all over-ruled, and all concentrated towards that one object.

Again, "House and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord." It makes no matter how extensive, or how valuable the landed, or the funded estate of the young heir may be. Unless Jehovah in his goodness shall bless him with a prudent wife, it soon may be squandered to the four winds. The destiny of thousands upon thousands in high life, may be appealed to for the illustration of this fact.

What a caution is here suggested to parents, while they are making prospective arrangements for their children! How important also is it that young people should early acquire the habit of acknowledging God in all their ways; and that they be particularly urgent, and make it a matter again and again of special prayer, that they may be directed in their feelings and in their social intercourse with one another!

3. It is by the special arrangements of Providence, that a good wife is continued to any man, and continued as a blessing and enjoyment.

When we take into view the daily and nightly fatigues; the cares and anxieties which in many cases fill up the whole life of an affectionate and active wife and mother, it is a matter of astonishment that so many of them maintain their vigor and activity to the last stage of their earthly existence. There certainly is a sense in which the woman is not the "weaker vessel." There is certainly in the very constitution of most of women, a something which fits them for enduring labors day after day, and night after night, which would crush in a very short period the most robust constitution known among men.

Consider again, that the whole domestic happiness depends upon an infinite variety of modifications of little things, and that all these little things, in all their various modifications are agreeable, or disagreeable, according to the temper, and disposition, and habits of the wife. All the world over, just in proportion as the wife is in good humor and has the full command of herself, is the enjoyment of the husband, and of the children, and of all the domestics. But he who commands the heavens and the moving of the mighty deep, can only effectually command the movements of the human heart in either man or woman. How important then is it, that a good husband should daily and hourly pray for his affectionate and pious wife; and how important is it, that every son and daughter should offer up sincere and fervent, and continued prayers for their mother.

III. We attend to the practical improvement of the whole subject. And,

1. Some of us once had good mothers, who are now in glory. We knew not their full value when we were under their care and protection. Nor can we at this day form any proper estimate of what we daily enjoy, as the fruit of their labors and prayers. What shall we render to the Lord for all his

benefits towards us? Let each of us say, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid."

The most of us who are young have still good mothers. Let us tremble at the thought of rejecting their authority, or treating them in any degree, or on any occasion with disrespect. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it."

It is presumed that the most of us (who have wives) have good wives; but if any of us are not so comfortable in that connection as we could wish to be, it may be well for us to remember, that the blame may be in the man rather than the woman.

And to all, whether young or old, married or unmarried, the admonition of the apostle applies: "Brethren the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away."

2. The subject suggests the importance and necessity of an extended and perfectly Christian course of education, for the female mind. The Redeemer always has made, and always will make, extensive use of females in his great and extended plans of mercy. The whole plan of salvation has for its object the restoring of our lost race and our apostate world, to something like their original dignity and glory. Hence we have every reason to believe, that the whole body of women will be renovated and elevated, as an essential and efficient part of the great system of means for accomplishing this great and glorious end.

Were all the mothers within the bosom of the church, the good mother of the Bible, all the children of the church would be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and every family would furnish in a very few years, one or two missionaries for the heathen world.

Were all the mothers in the land, the industrious, economical, and pious mother of the Bible, the whole face of society would be changed to the better in half a generation, and the government of the nation, the conducting of all national affairs, would become a very simple and easy operation.

3. To any husband who has lost by death a good wife, and to any children who have by death lost a good mother, the subject suggests not only a reason for the most cordial resignation, but reasons also for holy joy and elevation of mind.

A pious lady, whose husband had died in the evening, being asked next morning by a friend, *how* she felt, answered: "I have just been thinking how happy my good husband must be this morning, as he has been *one night* with the Redeemer in glory."

It was your new covenant God, who gave the good wife and the good mother, who made her a blessing and comfort, while she was continued here below. And she was preserved and made a blessing, under the protection of the prayer of the Mediator, "I pray not that thou shouldst take her out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep her from evil." And when she had served her God in her day and generation, she was removed in answer to another prayer of the Mediator, "Father, I will that she whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that she may behold my glory which thou hast given me." And it is no mean honor to have a wife and a mother thus exalted.

And heaven is the home of the great family of the redeemed. They shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. And thrice happy will that mother and father, and those sons and daughters be, who having been united in the closest ties on earth, shall as an unbroken family, become a constituent part of that one great assembly above.

SERMON CLXXXI.

By REV. DAVID MAGIE,

ELIZABETHTOWN, NEW-JERSEY.

THE SABBATH A NATIONAL BLESSING.

Mark ii. 27. *The Sabbath was made for man.*

No one, who believes in a future retribution and makes the Bible the basis of his sentiments, can fail to see that the Sabbath is associated with all our dearest interests for eternity. The command to keep one day in seven holy unto the Lord is grateful to his heart, because he is deeply sensible of the value of such a season of spiritual refreshment. It is on the Sabbath, more than on any other day of the week, that he rises above the world, holds fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and ripens for the rest which remaineth for the people of God. On this account every real Christian prizes the fourth precept of the Decalogue, and is ready to offer his devout prayer, that its authority upon the minds of the community may never be weakened.

Thus far all is plain. But has the Sabbath no blessings to scatter along the path-way of men, through the life which now is? Is this institution so exclusively spiritual in its character and aims, and so entirely blended with the high concerns of eternity, that it bestows no regard upon mankind as dwellers upon earth? Every attentive reader of the Bible, every candid observer of passing events will answer, that the Sabbath was intended to exert, and actually does exert, a most benign influence upon all the personal, domestic, and social relations of the present life. No individual or family, no neighborhood or community, ever kept the Lord's day holy without reaping rich temporal blessings from it. So well established is this truth, that the sanctification of the Sabbath may be forcibly urged, without taking one step over the confines of our civil and social enjoyments, or casting a single glance at the awful realities of the world to come.

The minister of the gospel can indeed take very high ground in enforcing the observance of one whole day in seven, as a season of rest. He may point his hearers to the clouds and darkness which enveloped Mount Sinai, and bid them listen to the voice of the Almighty, saying: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He may come forth to his people encompassed with arguments from the bed of death, the scenes of the last judgment, and the bliss or woe of the eternal world. These are the most cogent motives he can urge. But why should he not, for once, change his position, and trace the influence of the Sabbath upon the every-day, the fireside, the temporal condition of mankind? This is not divesting religion of its sacredness; it is only spreading that sacredness over the surface of society, so that its benefits may be apparent even to worldly men.

The Sabbath, our Savior says, was made for man. This is true, not in the sense of those who advocate so liberal an exposition of the fourth commandment as to rob it of its hallowed character; but as understood by those who regard the day as, in every point of view, an inestimable blessing to the world. This sacred season was scarcely less intended to cheer our residence on earth, than to prepare us for a better residence in heaven.

My sole object, on the present occasion, is to show that the Sabbath is peculiarly adapted to raise the character and improve the condition of men in this world. I beseech you to hear me candidly and patiently, and then say, whether the Lord's day is not fairly entitled to the affectionate regards of

all those, who would identify themselves with the great interests of public and private happiness. If religion is deemed of little account, I solicit your attention on other grounds. My appeal is to you as philanthropists, as patriots, as genuine republicans, as citizens of this free and favored land, in behalf of an institution which, as will be shown, stands connected with the welfare of our common country. You are called upon to see what respect you ought to pay to the Sabbath, and what efforts you ought to make to preserve it from desecration, from the relation which it bears to your dearest earthly comforts. My train of reasoning will be simple and unambiguous.

1. The provision which the Sabbath makes for rest from labor, is in itself a great blessing.

This is confessedly lowest in the scale of considerations for the observance of the Sabbath, but no benevolent man will affirm that it is a consideration unworthy of regard. We all feel more or less the effects of the curse: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread;" and it ill becomes us to turn away in disdain from the very institution which was designed to alleviate that curse. It is owing to the goodness and mercy of our God that we are permitted, every seventh day, to rest from the cares and toils in which the "fall" has involved us.

Man is so constituted that he cannot be incessantly putting forth his energies, without almost necessarily bringing upon himself premature debility and decay. This point has been decided, again and again, by the unerring test of experience. There must be seasons of relaxation for the laboring classes of society, regular days on which the mental and physical powers may unbend, or they soon lose their strength and elasticity. Both mind and body have their limit of care and toil, and the God who made them knows just what suspension of effort is necessary. This exigency of man's nature he has mercifully consulted, in the appointment of the Sabbath as a day of entire and uninterrupted rest from every secular pursuit and concern.

Go to the industrious, enterprising farmer, mechanic, or merchant, and ask his opinion on this interesting subject. He will tell you, from his own experience, that six successive days are long enough for close and constant exertion, and that one seventh part of the time is not more than is requisite to recruit his exhausted strength. He rejoices when the cares and perplexities of the week are ended, so that he may withdraw himself for a little from life's busy scene. On the Sabbath he can lay aside every worldly labor and anxiety, go to the house of God, mingle with kind friends, and have his mind occupied with cheering and refreshing truths. Thus passes away the day, and he rises the next morning with a peaceful bosom and an invigorated frame, to resume the duties of his proper calling. Such an one, mark it when you will, can accomplish more for this world than he who sets at naught the institution of the Sabbath. One of the most distinguished civilians of our country has given it as his deliberate and fixed opinion, that six days in a week for either labor or study are better than seven.

There is no lack of competent and credible witnesses to testify to the truth of these remarks. The late excellent *William Wilberforce* declares, that at one period of his parliamentary career, his duties were so multiplied and exhausting, that his health must have been utterly prostrated, had it not been for the seasonable relief which the Sabbath afforded him. The stillness and serenity of this holy day refreshed his spirits, after they had been jaded by the arduous debates of the British senate. It is encouraging to see a man, every where regarded as an honor to the land which gave him birth, and a benefactor of the race, paying such decided homage to the Sabbath, and acknowledging his deep indebtedness to its gracious provisions.

Still more important is this arrangement to that portion of the community, whose time is very much at the disposal of others. One reason, and a permanent one too, why the Israelites were required to observe the Sabbath was, that their man servant and maid servant might rest as well as themselves. How merciful is the aspect of such a requisition towards all the poor and

dependant in the land. The return of the Sabbath rescues them, for a season, from every thing painful in the inferiority of their allotment, and reminds them that whatever be the depression of their civil condition, they may still be the Lord's freemen. They visit the same sanctuary, and join in the same songs of praise with those who in other respects are above them. The happy influence of such an arrangement upon the minds, the habits, the sense of self-respect, and the feeling of contentment of those in the lower walks of life, can scarcely be sufficiently estimated. The effect of the Sabbath here is twofold. It blunts the edge and smooths the asperity of authority on the one hand, and on the other, it begets such a temper that submission itself becomes pleasant.

We are not, however, to stop here. The God of the Sabbath condescends to notice the very cattle which minister to our gratification, and provides for them a season in which they also may enjoy repose. Truly his tender mercies are over *all* the works of his hands. A day of rest for these inferior animals is kind and compassionate, even when they are in the hands of men of humane and tender feelings. But it is not every man that regardeth the life or the comfort of his beast. The owners of these creatures, in multitudes of cases, are cruel and mercenary to the highest degree, and disposed to push them far beyond their real strength. How important then that such men should be restrained by the strong arm of God's authority! Whatever be their dispositions, there is one day of the week on which they may not, under pain of the divine displeasure, employ one of their beasts for any secular purpose at all. Rides for amusement, and journeys for business cannot be taken, without flying in the face of an explicit command of the Most High.

But will men be losers by obeying God in this particular? Far from it. If we had nothing further in view than to have our horses clothed with strength, and our oxen firm for labor, we must yield to them that portion of time, which the Decalogue prescribes. This point was fully proved in the recent inquiries in the British house of commons, in reference to the better observance of the Lord's day. It was then ascertained, by the testimony of the most extensive and respectable stage proprietors, that a horse can perform more service, and will enjoy more health and spirits, in a given number of years, by giving him every Sabbath as a season of rest. All the *gain*, therefore, is on the side of godliness.

No—it is not in anger, but in love that God requires a stop, a complete stop, to be put to all business on this sacred day. The good of the community requires that the sound of a tool, the prancing of a hoof, or the rattling of a wheel, for secular purposes, should not be heard from one end of the land to the other. All should be quiet and tranquil, as on that blessed morning when God himself rested from all his work which he had made.

2. The worldly interests of mankind are promoted by a careful observance of the Sabbath.

It is not affirmed that every one who keeps the Sabbath holy, will as a thing of course become rich, or great, or honorable, in the common acceptance of these terms. But the proposition to be established is, that the due observance of the Sabbath has a direct and palpable tendency to improve a man's temporal condition.

Hear what the Scriptures say on this subject. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them, then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage unto the sowing time, and ye shall eat your bread to the full. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

These are specified as some of the happy results of keeping the Sabbath. But let us look at the reverse of this bright and animated scene. "If ye will not hearken unto me, and will *not* do all these commandments, ye shall sow

your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth. And I will break the pride of your power, and make the heaven as iron, and the earth as brass. And your strength shall be spent in vain, for the land shall not yield her increase, nor the trees their fruit. And I will walk contrary unto you, and I will punish you seven times for your sins. And I will bring the land into desolation, and it shall enjoy her Sabbaths."

It is in this way that God himself speaks. Without reference, however, to any particular interposition of Providence in the case, it may be shown that the proper observance of the Sabbath tends to prosperity as a natural and obvious result. The hallowed influence, with which this day comes attended, cannot but operate favorably on the whole character and habits of man. Not only does it refresh him for labor, but by its lessons of industry and sobriety it always disposes him to turn that labor to good account. Will a man go away from the sanctuary to squander his estate by extravagant arrangements and expenses? Will he depart from the courts of the Lord, to forget that diligence in business is a duty, as well as fervor of spirit? Will he be seen one hour in the temple of God, and the next in the tavern or the grog-shop? Will he lose sight of the claims of his wife and his little ones, while he hears from the pulpit that such a man is worse than an infidel? This, as a general thing, is not to be expected. If he becomes a spendthrift, an idler, or a follower of strong drink, you will soon see him bidding adieu to all the ministrations of the Sabbath.

There is one fact, which serves to set this subject in a strong, but just light. Every unsanctified Sabbath is likely to be attended with those extra expenses which idleness and vice seldom fail to create. One of these days devoted to amusements, costs more than five, or even ten of them occupied with their appropriate duties. Desecrated Sabbaths stand at the head of those avenues which lead directly to the abodes of infamy, intemperance, and death. There is nothing to be *gained* by breaking the fourth commandment. You could not multiply the number of squalid, miserable, and vicious poor, faster than by blotting out the remembrance of the Sabbath from the minds of men. Such a measure would be sure to infest our streets with noisy beggars, and fill our hospitals and prisons with hapless inmates.

But some one may still ask, whether the preacher is prepared to make good the assertion that all labor on the Sabbath is unproductive? Will he maintain that the immense business which on this day is driven forward on our rivers, canals, and rail-roads, is always unprofitable? Is it his idea that no man can enlarge his estate by taking the Lord's time for the doing of his own work? These are fair questions, and they deserve a candid answer. Let it then be conceded, that since the present is a state of trial and not of recompense, the most wicked individuals in the community, who neither fear God nor regard man, are sometimes suffered to increase in wealth, until their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish. But does this prove, as a general principle, that there is any natural connection between impiety and prosperity? The owner of a stage-coach, or a steam-boat, may accumulate thousands, and yet run them every Sabbath day; but how is it with the pleasure-loving throng, who are thus enticed from their families and their homes? Does it put either money into their pockets, or contentment into their hearts? All the advantage here, if advantage there be any, is on the side of the few, while the loss falls upon the many. Even this, however, is not stating the whole case. The wisest and best observers of human events tell us that, if we follow along the path of these men, we shall generally find that the end of it is covered with darkness. Their sun, after all, is wont to set in a cloud.

Especially is the Sabbath the poor man's friend. Its uniform tendency is to encourage those industrious and frugal habits, which are so inseparably connected with the comfort and respectability of the humbler classes of society. You cannot ordinarily consign to want, ignorance, or vice, the individual who

regularly attends upon the ordinances of religion. You can scarcely prevent the respectability of that family, which we see, Sabbath after Sabbath, coming up to the courts of the Lord. Let wicked men say what they will, there does come an influence from such scenes, to beget a feeling of self-respect, and ward off the evils of poverty and depression. This point is susceptible of the clearest demonstration. The house of God, all the country over, is the radiating point of light, and peace, and industry, and contentment, for the whole neighborhood in which it is placed. So true is this, that our poor rates could be lessened in no way more effectually, than by bringing about a universal observance of the Sabbath.

3. The Sabbath, when rightly observed, furnishes the very best school of virtue and good morals.

All the most respectable infidels have been ready to acknowledge, that there is no code of laws for the regulation of human conduct, like that of the Bible. According to the testimony of the eloquent, though depraved and infidel Rousseau, it is madness to compare Socrates with the Son of Mary, in this respect. The precepts of the Bible surpass all other precepts, because they are intended to control the heart as well as the conduct, and to make the tree good, as the first and most effectual step towards the production of good fruit. Only let this blessed book rule in every bosom, and men will do to others just as they wish others to do to them. Injustice, fraud, and oppression, all meanness, duplicity, and over-reaching, would be done away at once, and done away for ever.

But when are these laws to be expounded, and applied to the various duties of common life? As it respects the bulk of mankind, the Sabbath is almost the only opportunity they have for any careful and thorough attention to this deeply interesting subject. On this sacred day, however, they are detached from all earthly concerns, and their minds are free to attend to nobler pursuits. From week to week they are collected in a school established for the inculcation of heavenly wisdom, and thus one-seventh part of their whole life is spent in learning their duty to God and man. What an opportunity is this for improvement in all that is excellent, and lovely, and of good report. The man who dies in middle life, is furnished with five full years; and if he lives to old age, with ten full years of instruction, exactly adapted to make him a better husband, a better father, a better neighbor, and a better member of the community. For a class-book the Bible is put into his hands. God himself is the teacher, and every lesson is dictated by that wisdom which cometh from above. Every precept, every promise, every threatening is alike replete with a sound and healthful influence. Here it is that the laws of the Most High are brought home to the bosoms and business of men, and they go away to lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.

In accordance with these remarks, you will always find the purest and most elevated morality among those who keep the Sabbath holy. This assertion is made without the least fear of successful contradiction; and you are invited to test its truth as often as you please. Ride through the country, and examine its towns and villages—mingle with the inhabitants of every grade, and become acquainted with their feelings and habits,—then tell me candidly where you find most industry, most love of order, most contentment, most sobriety, most purity, most freedom from low and debasing vices. I anticipate your answer. These are virtues which grow under the genial influences of the Sabbath, and among the people who love the sound of the church-going bell. But can you point me to one disturber of the peace of society, to one idle, dissolute family, to one single vicious neighborhood, that regards the Lord's day? This will not be pretended. *Sir Matthew Hale* says, "that of all the persons convicted of capital crimes while he was upon the bench, there were a few only who were not ready to confess that they began their career of wickedness in a neglect of the duties of the Sabbath."

It cannot be otherwise than that virtue and good morals must disappear when the Sabbath is forgotten. In every instance where this memorial of

creation and redemption is treated with neglect, a strong and resistless tide of iniquity is seen to set in. Look where you will over the earth; if the Sabbath has become a desolation, there is little of domestic comfort left. Let this day be once made like the rest of the week, in our own country, and all the foundations of social happiness will be broken up. A single half century would suffice to carry us back to the rudeness, and atheism, and vice of the dark ages.

This matter is entitled to the fullest investigation. We will suppose that you are in search for a quiet, contented, and prosperous neighborhood. But you never can find it, if you travel beyond the influence of the Lord's day. You are looking for parental tenderness and filial obedience. But these are seldom met with, where no holy time is recognized. You are inquiring after domestic purity and all the endearments of social life. But they are not to be found where the Sabbath gives no tone to moral sentiment. You wish to reside in a place where life is valued, and property is secure. But no such place exists, where the restraining energy of the fourth commandment is not felt. Make the inquiry as often as you please, and you find that virtue and sound morals decline just in proportion as you recede from the illuminations and restraints of the holy Sabbath. Darkness covers the earth, and grows darkness the people.

I am confident that this subject has never yet received a due degree of attention from the men of this happy land. Suppose that the Sabbath was abolished, our religious temples burnt to the ground, the public preaching of the gospel interdicted, and all the ministers of the sanctuary driven into exile, what would be the result? Why, you may tell by a visit to those countries where there is no Sabbath, no house of God, no teacher of the way of life. In every such case, without a solitary exception, ignorance, vice, and misery, overspread the entire surface of society, and affect its very vitals.

But will it be deemed unsuitable for me to add, that the Sabbath is the least expensive, as well as the best school? This is especially true in our own country, where the people choose their own pastor, and assign him such support as is deemed by both parties competent. We have no ecclesiastical revenues, no mitred heads, no superb palaces for the clergy, to drain away the scanty earnings of the poor. Here a multitude may receive instruction at a cost which bears hard upon none, and which returns even in kind more than it receives. Many families pay as much for a few lessons given to a single child, in some ornamental branch of education, as they do for the yearly religious advantages of the whole household. It is unpleasant to add that the little which religion costs is not always cheerfully paid. The fact however is obvious, that no instruction whatever can be had at so small an expense, as that which relates to piety and good morals. But the Sabbath school, also, as well as the pulpit, illustrates this idea. What an amount of talent, and energy of character, and real consecration of heart to a good object, is to be found among the tens of thousands of teachers in this blessed institution. They are giving of their time, and often of their money too, most liberally to this hallowed service; and though in most cases they receive but little honor from men, God himself will reward them openly. Such gratuitous efforts for the upbuilding of his kingdom shall not be forgotten.

4. The personal and social character of man is elevated by a proper observance of the Sabbath.

One of the best safeguards to an upright course of conduct is to be found in a deeply rooted, and well regulated self-respect. The man who has a due regard for his character and standing in society, will generally strive to merit and secure the good opinion of those around him. But there is no season when this sentiment is so strengthened, and brought into such wholesome exercise, as on the Sabbath. Every thing connected with this sacred day, the events to which it looks back, the prospect which it opens, and the feelings which it fosters, are all adapted to give dignity and elevation to man's character. He will indeed be sensible of his own littleness, but he cannot

forget his immortal existence and high destiny. Every time he attends upon the services of the sanctuary, there will be sure to be something to expand his mind, and purify his affections, and raise him above ignoble pleasures and pursuits.

It is literally impossible for a person to attend seriously to the duties of the Sabbath and not be benefitted. Those who stately come up to the house of the God of Jacob, that they may be taught his laws, will never fall into total neglect and obscurity. No individual, or family, or neighborhood, ever pursued this course without securing some degree of respect and consideration by it. They will be improved both in their minds and manners. There will be more of neatness in their apparel, and cleanliness in their manner of living, of order in their habitations, and of decorum in their intercourse with each other. As a mere matter of taste and refinement, what can be so lovely as to see a whole community flocking together Sabbath after Sabbath to the house of God. There is something here on which the eye of philanthropy may look with delight. Met together on a holy day, and in a sacred place, and united with a devout assembly, in worshipping the God of heaven, men must improve in every good feeling and purpose. They may be poor, but there will be a charm of peace and contentment spread over their character, which goes very far to rob poverty itself of its sharpest sting. A sort of sweet serenity will be seen to dwell with such as love the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

Think also how the Sabbath is calculated to check and repress all the unamiable traits of human character. What can the pride of rank or fortune find to feed upon, where men are gathered together in the presence of the infinite Jehovah? How shall the wise man glory in his wisdom, or the rich man in his riches, at the throne of Him before whom all are upon the same level? The glare of fashion and the pomp of wealth are annihilated, when men find themselves mingling with their poorer neighbors in the service of Almighty God. They all sing one song, meet at one sacramental table, and the little differences of external condition are lost sight of. There it is that the loftiness so natural to wealth and honors is bowed down, and all haughtiness laid in the dust, and the Lord alone exalted.

In this view of the subject, the Sabbath seems to be truly republican in its aspect. At any rate, its provisions exactly correspond with the spirit and genius of our free institutions. Never was there a louder cry raised in favor of equal rights and privileges than at the present time; but it may be doubted whether the best method of attaining these important blessings is generally understood. The requisitions of the fourth commandment would blend the different classes of society together in a happier manner than any which mere human wisdom has devised. We do not wish to see such a levelling produced as is witnessed when our great men mingle with the low and worthless in groceries and bar-rooms, for the purpose of influencing the ballot-box. This is a sort of equality to be sure; but it is an equality effected not by raising the inferior classes up, but by sinking the others down. Such an amalgamation is likely to do more harm than good. But the Bible shows us a more excellent way; and happy for us will it be, if our leading political men should come at length to perceive the adaptation of the sanctuary to promote the healthful action of every part of the body politic. There the rich and the poor can be brought together in a way that shall bless both. The high can be taught condescension, and the low self-respect, without the operation of Agrarian laws, or the adoption of any measure to blot out the necessary distinctions and gradations of life.

5. The due observance of the Sabbath is a distinguished blessing to nations.

On this subject the Bible speaks too plainly to be misunderstood. This holy book assures us, that there can be no such thing as permanent success by taking counsel against the Lord; and that no people can abandon his Sabbath without being abandoned by him. We have here, moreover, a

detailed account of the divine dealings with one particular nation, in regard to this very matter. So long as the Jews were careful to observe the Sabbath, they were made—to use the beautiful language of inspiration—to ride upon the high places of the earth, and were fed with the heritage of Jacob their father. But no sooner did they come to set at naught this blessed institution, than their affairs, civil and ecclesiastical, began to verge towards speedy ruin. At length their city was destroyed, their altars demolished, their temple burnt to the ground, and the whole nation carried into a seventy years' captivity, on purpose, as God informed them, that the land might enjoy her Sabbaths. They lost their liberty by attempting to rob God of time which he had claimed as his own.

Perhaps, however, it is thought that there was something so peculiar in the condition of the Jews, that their history cannot illustrate the duty of nations at the present day. This no believer in the Bible will admit, yet our argument is complete without a reference to their case. Pause, then, and inquire, what has been the secret of the immense wealth and gigantic power of the people of Great Britain, now for centuries in succession? How is it that that little island, surrounded by the mighty ocean, and constituting but a mere speck on the surface of the globe, has been able so to mould the destinies of the world? That nation is not blessed with a richer soil, or a brighter sky, or a more salubrious clime than their neighbors. This amazing prosperity must be owing to something which enters into the ingredients of the moral character of that people, and places them in so commanding an attitude as it regards the rest of the world. That something, no one acquainted with their history can hesitate to say, is the Christian religion, with its Sabbaths, and its temples, and its ministry of reconciliation. On this point there can be no dispute. Even Hume himself expressly declares that the freedom which the British constitution guarantees to the subject, is to be traced to the noble efforts of the Puritans to be unshackled in serving God.

This case is the more striking from its contrast with that of a naturally gallant and high-minded nation in the very neighborhood. France, during the awful period of her revolution, was led on from one step of impiety to another, until at length she solemnly decreed that there should be no Sabbaths. The temples of religion were deserted, and her altars laid in the dust. But what was the consequence to the character, the morals, and the prosperity of that people, of thus publicly defying the God of heaven, by abolishing this most important of all his institutions? You may see it in the scenes of distress and wretchedness, carnage and blood, into which the nation was plunged. It would really seem as if God, by this example, intended to let the world know, what communities must expect, when they openly trample on his ordinances.

There is, however, no nation under heaven for which the Sabbath has done more than for ourselves. What was it that brought our pilgrim fathers across the trackless ocean, to these distant and then dreary shores? They came here, as you all know, to enjoy religious liberty, and to make a fair experiment of what the pure simple gospel could do to bless mankind. This it was that nerved their arm to prostrate the mighty forest, and raise up towns and villages amidst hosts of savage foes. What was it also that enabled this infant republic to wage successful war against the mightiest nation on earth? Ah! none in that tremendous conflict, which tried men's souls, stood firmer at their post than those who had learned their duty at the altar of God. But for such elements of character as had been generated by the commanding influence of the Sabbath, the far famed *Declaration of Independence* would have proved a dead letter, and we should have become a prey to all the anarchy and misrule of the South American States. Examine the events of those times: trace these events up to their causes, and then say how much we owe to the fourth commandment. We never should have gained a permanent footing in this land, or become a free and independent nation, had not the men, who have now been long sleeping in our valleys,

possessed a character which had been formed under the influence of the Sabbath.

When shall this point be understood? You may look the earth over, in its length and breadth, and you will see men understanding and enjoying civil liberty only under the illumination of the holy Sabbath. The fact is, such a people cannot be enslaved. Opinion has a power which even the bayonet has not. These are not the materials out of which some ambitious demagogue can form bands to tread down the liberties of his country. The Sabbath will teach a nation to appreciate its rights, and nerve its arm to defend those rights.

Now, if these things are so, it must be a spirit of hostility to all our dearest interests to oppose, or in any way to abuse the Sabbath.

The sacred observance of this day is intimately connected with every personal, domestic, and social blessing; and not less connected is it with the welfare of our common country. It is then a momentous inquiry—in what colors is the future history of this nation to be written? Is the Sabbath still to maintain its power over the minds of the community? Is the pulpit to send forth its hallowed instructions? And are the fountains of society to be purified by the spirit of the gospel? If so, we are safe. Families will be kind and peaceful, neighborhoods moral and orderly, States magnanimous and conciliatory, and this great confederacy present such a spectacle of quietness and prosperity as the world has never yet beheld. But alas! there is much to fear. In less than half a century, according to the present ratio of increase, there will be found forty millions of souls in this land, located in different States, each possessing sovereign power, and under the influence of separate interests and feelings. Now I ask, what is to continue to hold together this immense multitude? We acknowledge no autocracy here to urge the people to obedience at the point of the sword, willing or unwilling. Ours is a self-government, a government resting entirely upon the moral sense, the intelligence, the integrity of the people, and it cannot live a single month in any other way. Destroy individual, household, and neighborhood-virtue and morality, and the country is ruined at once. The question then recurs, and it is one which must come home to every heart, how shall we do without the soothing influence, the kind feeling, the genuine piety of the Sabbath? I have no disposition to bring a railing accusation against any one, but surely the men who would drive away the light and lessen the power of this holy day, know not what they do. They may see no evil in turning the full tide of their example against the high command of heaven. They may dream of no disaster to the morals of the community from a desecration of these sacred hours. But the fact is, by thus corrupting private virtue they are taking the surest course to overturn the liberties of the country, and leave it a heap of splendid ruins.

It is not always wise to inquire why the former days were better than these, but it may be useful for me to turn parents back to the lessons of their own early years. You well remember what your pious fathers told you of the quiet and undisturbed Sabbaths of former times. During that golden period,—golden at least so far as this matter is concerned—each town and village in the land, was as serene and tranquil, as quiet and noiseless, as the summer's evening. It would have shocked the feelings of your venerated ancestors, to see a steam-boat emptying the dregs of one of our large cities, upon the surrounding country, on this holy day. They would have trembled to witness the bustle and movement of our loaded cars and canal boats, as they hasten forward during all the hours of the Sabbath. But these are things with which your eyes and ears have become familiar. And do you never inquire after the result of all this? Have you no fear for the future safety and comfort of the little ones, that are now the joy of your hearts, and the pride of your houses? Arise then, and do your duty. Command your children, and your household after you, that they keep the way of the Lord.

As patriots too, you have a deep interest in securing the proper observance of the Sabbath. It must be admitted on all hands, that we owe more to our religion, than we do to our soil, our climate, our policy, or our courage. We are too apt to glory in our resources, in the immensity of our territory, in the freedom of our civil institutions, and in our multiplying millions. But is there no example of a nation's breaking down merely by its own weight! It was this that brought proud imperial Rome to the dust, after she had long been known as the mistress of the world. The hour too of Israel's pride was the hour of her downfall, the period from which her glory became dim, and she fled before her enemies. Nor can any thing save the land in which we live, but the Sabbath. How eloquently then should every patriot plead for this heaven-born institution! He should always identify the proper observance of the Sabbath with the high interests of his beloved country, and seek her prosperity mainly through this sacred channel.

But philanthropists also are deeply concerned to promote the sanctity of the Sabbath. You wish well to man, and would rejoice to see some kind hand wiping away the tears from the face of this sad and gloomy world. All that can be done, however, is to heal some of the bitter waters. And this you will best accomplish by bringing the influence of the Sabbath to restrain the vices of men, to elevate their character, to inspire them with right sentiments, and to mingle mercies in every cup. Begin then by taking a gauge of the misery which comes upon the community by a profanation of this day. Turn aside a little to some abode of crime and wretchedness, and ask its inmates what it was that first brought a cloud over their prospects. Visit our prisons and penitentiaries, and inquire of their inhabitants how it was that they came to violate the laws of God and man. Then go and do your duty. Encourage the spirit of the gospel. Honor the men who fear God. On all occasions, and in all companies, be the firm and decided advocates of the Sabbath.

Finally, if these things are so, all the friends of morality and good order should make an effort to correct public sentiment in regard to the Sabbath. As for legislation, either from the States, or general government, in favor of this day, it is not, in the present condition of things, to be expected. It would be well indeed if the whole weight of governmental influence were not against the Lord's day. But our statute books might be filled with enactments for the better observance of the Sabbath, and they would serve no good purpose whatever, unless energy was imparted to these enactments by the correct moral sense of the community. What then can be done? Appeals to our rulers would probably avail nothing. We must begin by humbling ourselves before God as individuals, and families, and congregations, for our own, and the nation's sin of Sabbath breaking. This step sincerely taken, may propitiate heaven on our behalf. But having thus carried the cause to God, we must go forth, through evil report and good report, and give to the Sabbath all the aid of a correct example, and all the influence of earnest decision. There is, it is hoped, a redeeming spirit in the land, if good men can only be aroused from their slumbers. The enemies of the Sabbath, and of all its salutary appendages, are, it is true, carrying matters with a high hand, and in every part of the land are perverting the bounties of God's providence into occasions for provoking his displeasure. But the land-marks of Christian morality are not yet swept away, and men of virtue may make a stand. Now is the time for a vigorous effort. If the Sabbath ever becomes a by-word and a reproach in the land of our fathers' sepulchres, what is to become of liberty? and especially what is to become of the Church of the living God? Must the ark be removed from the hill of Zion, and look for a resting place in the isles of the sea, or on the shore of some heathen country? Let us indulge in no unfounded dreams of security. The Most High can easily cast us down from our proud eminence, and cause us to perish by the blast of the breath of his nostrils. His decree has gone forth, it will be executed—*The nation and kingdom that will not serve me shall perish.*